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Arsiesis
AND OTHER
Poems *

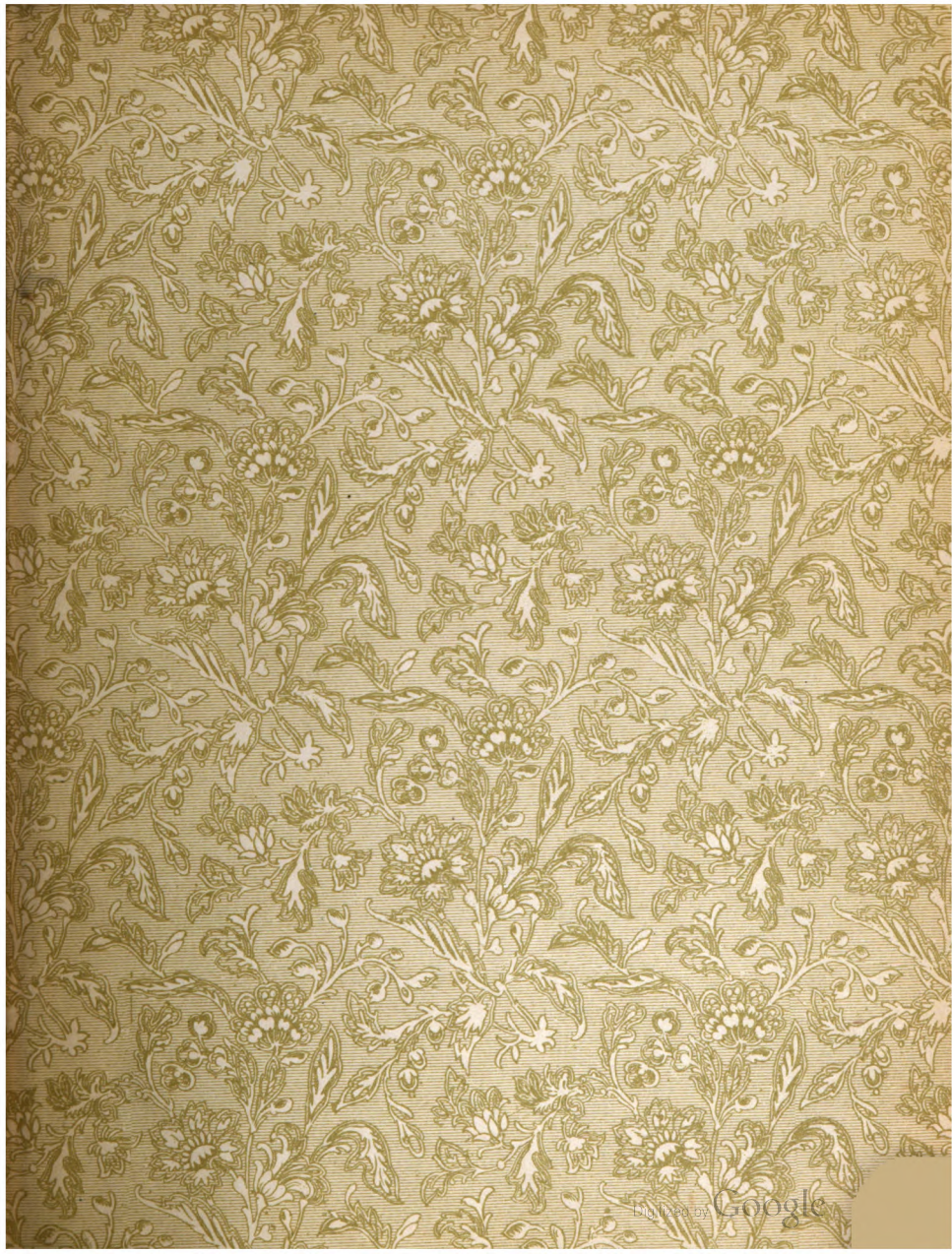


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ARSIESIS
AND
OTHER POEMS

Sx.

What wonder if they lose the light
Who make blind Love their guide by day and night.—
POLIZIANO.



NEW YORK
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
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1881

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P R E F A C E .

But "why then publish?" There are no rewards
Of fame or profit when the world grows weary.
I ask, in turn, why do you play at cards?
Why drink? Why read? To make some hour
less dreary.
It occupies me to turn back regards
On what I've seen or ponder'd, sad or cheery,
And what I write, I cast upon the stream,
To swim or sink—I 've had at least my dream.

DON JUAN.

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INTRODUCTION.

Close thine eyes ;
And for a moment gazing back o'er Time's
Unpeopled avenue, behold on either
Side the ruins of many a nation lie !
But seest thou in the distance far, towers,
Temples, pyramids well nigh enveloped
By a sea of sand ? And wouldst thou let thy
Fancy roam awhile 'midst most forgotten
Things ? There graven on the stone is found a
Story of the by-gone day, which, tho' not
Written out in all its length, is well made
Clear by score of pictur'd words. Ope' thine eyes ;
Vanished is that mind-created picture
On which thy gaze did rest. But list and I
Will weave for thee, as best I may, a tale
Of fact and fancy :



ARSIESIS.

CANTO I.

I WAS then the very noon of night,
Each star did lend its utmost light,
The gathered gloom to drive away
And make a counterfeit of day ;
Whilst she of all the stars the queen,
Lent silvery radiance to the scene.
Now 'neath the soft star-lighted sky,
A city of the East did lie,
While o'er the plain, in silence deep,
Rested that night of living, sleep.
As in some landscape of a dream,
Swift flowed the Nile, that mystic stream,
Whose murmured melody was heard,
A low sweet song that had no word,
Which for those who in sleep did lie,
Seemed as a gentle lullaby.

Partaking also in the calm,
Like watchmen stood the graceful palm ;
For e'er anon, a sudden breeze
Would touch the foliage of those trees :
As sentry, who tho' straight may stand,
Has felt the touch of slumber's hand ;
A cooling gust which passeth by
Does startle him, he ope's the eye,
Then seeing that the cause is plain,
Sinks to oblivion again.

Grand 'neath the moonlight did appear
A palace by the river near ;
Close by, tho' most in shadow hid,
High tower'd a lofty pyramid :—
The human fancy is a stream,
On which men float and idly dream ;
A river which they cannot know
Where do its mystic waters flow.
Its source is in the human mind,
But who its ending point can find ?
They watch the shores, as drifting far,
Through lands in which its waters are ;

Find scenes more fair than words can tell,
Where nobler beings seem to dwell.
As if the gate of Heav'n so bright
Had open'd for an angel's flight ;
The shining messenger swift goes,
And quickly does the portal close.
Men, for a moment, see those rays,
Too bright by far for mortal gaze ;
Then with a feeling most of pain
They wake to earth and life again.
But never in the dreams of night,
Nor 'midst the fancy's wildest flight,
Was seen in bright ideal place
A fairer form, a lovelier face,
Than in that palace, yonder seen,
Where dwelt the great Egyptian queen.
Oh, that this verse might perfect be,
As perfect in its way as she !
If so, a sweeter poem then,
Did never flow from Byron's pen.

Now, in the custom of that day,
A temple not far distant lay ;

So, when religious rites she'd see,
The place might most convenient be.
But naught of spire, nor tow'r for bell,
Abode of deity did tell ;
No gilded cross nor walls of gray
Told men it was a place to pray.
For changeful as a swallow's flight,
Has been religion to our sight.
Men for their sins did then atone,
'Fore images of wood and stone ;
While e'en as sure of right were they,
As those who now do know the way.
But as the mind of man did change,
'T would then be more than passing strange,
If Christian emblem one could find
In deserts of the human mind ;
For when no heavenly light men see,
Their minds indeed a desert be.
But sure' some other emblem, then,
Did represent the faith of men ;
'T was neither cross, nor tow'r for bell,
Which did this place of worship tell ;
Since 'fore each temple there did stand

A sculptured figure, strangely grand,
With lion's form and woman's face,—
It seemed a guardian to the place.
And this, 't is clear, was the portent
Of what men wished to represent :
Man doth of greater knowledge be,
The lion of more strength than he.
Thus, these Egyptians did combine
The two in form of mixed design,
And offered, in this novel plan,
Improvement on created man.
So here, in solemn, mystic state,
The Sphinx did guard the temple gate.

An archèd door, from which did go
A roadway to the depths below,
All paved with stone of purest white,
On which there fell a misty light
From archèd roof, of strange design,
Where softly rolling fire did shine.
And of this roof, each glowing block
Seemed hewn from phosphorescent rock,
Whose living light did ever play
Along that straight and narrow way.

Now readers of the modern time
Do seek a reason with the rhyme ;
And few of wonders they allow,
Save when the writer tells the "how" ;
More pleasing to the readers' eye
When they are told the reason why.
But of those ages long ago
Indeed 't is little that we know ;
For, gazing back through thousand years,
In dim perspective all appears ;
The brighter points are seen, 't is true,
But those more dim are lost to view ;
Things seen are offered to the sight,
The cause, some other pen must write.

An entrance this bright path did let,
To place that was more wondrous yet ;
A temple worthy of the fame
Of her which Isis is the name :
The mightiest goddess did she stand,
Of all in that Egyptian land.
And here it was the priests did tell,
The deity best loved to dwell.

Yet entered in, t' was hard to see
What might its form and outline be ;
For little aid to human sight
Did give the dimly burning light.
But there on altar massive, grand,
A carvèd image seemed to stand ;
While tow'ring columns did give proof
Of bearing up a mighty roof,—
That roof, tho' most in shadow hid,
Was e'en the lofty pyramid.

Oh, for the power to here give space
The hidden beauties of that place !
From grandeur of what 's seen, 't is clear,
How much the light would make appear.
And all this would be told to thee,
If mortals in the dark could see !

But naught of sound disturbed the air,
It seemèd that no life was there.
Ah ! this indeed is something more,
Which looketh like a grated door,
Whose many squares of yellow light

Appear like gilding on the night.
Behind the altar was concealed
What now so plainly is revealed.
But softly, silent as the tomb,
Explore that little inner room.
Perchance there's something there that may
The cost of time and effort pay.
Ay, there a man of noble mien,
In deep reflection wrapt is seen ;
While on a table standing by,
A roll of papyrus doth lie ;
Likewise are visible to sight
Some implements wherewith to write.
But papyrus and reeden pen
Did lie unused, unthought of then ;
For while his hand did on them stay,
His mind seemed center'd far away.

Like unto those who chance to be
Upon the borders of the sea ;
Whilst looking far across the haze,
A moving form doth meet their gaze,
Most hidden in the misty light,

Too far removed for human sight.
'T is then the eye with effort kind
Doth seek to gratify the mind ;
With eyes half closed, that which doth flee,
With all their strength they try to see ;
But all they see, is that 't is true
The object is beyond their view.
So the Egyptian sitteth there,
Deep thinking in his carvèd chair ;
And gazeth on a boundless sea,
O'er which dim objects seem to flee ;—
But some will say, this is not clear,
The meaning seemeth hidden here.
How can a man beneath the ground
Gaze on the circling waters round ?
Or did that ancient day give birth
To men that gazèd through the earth ?
List for a moment, then will be
The meaning very clear to thee :
That sea, thou sayest hard to find,
Is e'en within the human mind,
Whose surface bright by reason lit,
Ideas o'er do seem to flit ;

And that their meaning may be caught,
Men view them with the eye of thought.

Now from the objects gathered there,
The linen vestments he doth wear,
Take all in all, 't is plain to see
He must a priest of Isis be.
And like to those who reason best
While working, when the world's at rest,
So, tho' the night had wellnigh gone,
This priest did think and study on.
What thoughts do in his brain revolve ?
What problem doth he seek to solve ?
A theme of Science—for some men
The records show were learnèd then ?
Or some new wonder, which the fame
To Isis he will give the name ?
Oh ! Priest, indeed, for thee 't is best
To seek forgetfulness in rest.
Soon all thy nights shall wakeful be,
And sleep will from thine eyelids flee ;
Thy love for Isis thee compel
To work for her a miracle.

Recruit thy strength in Slumber's land,
Perchance thy task is near at hand.

See, hanging there within his sight,
A tiny globe of crimson light ;
And frequent doth his gaze repair
Unto the flame soft burning there,
As he doth often toward it turn,
To rest assured it still does burn,
When sudden vanishes the spark,
Its life is gone, the globe is dark :
Yet wick and oil are present still—
It seemed an act of human will.

Now when no light his eye does meet,
Straightway he riseth from his seat,
Like one who has been called away
By summons that he must obey ;
For lo ! it is a sign indeed,
The Queen doth now his presence need.
Thus called by her own command,
Must quickly in her presence stand.
He carefully then placed aright

His robes of linen snowy white,
And from its place a mantle drew,
Which quick he o'er his shoulders threw.
Then did across the chamber pass,
And stood before a metal glass,
That on the forehead he might place
The emblem of his priestly race.
And standing there, most plain to see,
Of princely form and face was he :
A lofty forehead which did tell,
That there intelligence must dwell ;
And, 'neath the archèd brows, dark eye
Where did a world of feeling lie ;
With lines of every feature fair,
As if some sculptor carved them there ;
And in each point of form and face
Was there a touch of native grace ;
A single look did show how well,
The story blood will ever tell.

Then glancing 'round, as if to see
That no one else may present be,
He closely by the wall does stand,

And 'gainst the stone doth press the hand.
A massive door swings slowly back,
Disclosing there a pavèd track,
A passage to the palace found,
Which leadeth there beneath the ground.
He quickly through the opening goes,
Which softly does behind him close,
Hastens to see what this may mean,
To learn the pleasure of the Queen.

CANTO II.

SEE yonder in the distance blue,
Soft colored by enchantment's hue,
A lofty mountain holds a place,
With flower-decked valley at its base,
Where Flora well might love to roam,
And call it by the name of home.
A castle 's on the summit seen,
With walls by ivy painted green ;
Gray towers which seem to seek the sky—
'T is picturesque unto the eye.

But now the slowly waning day
Doth seem to beg it there may stay ;
And lightens up that gray so cold,
With hues of rich empurpl'd gold ;
More lovely shades have all things ta'en,
And rosy-hued each window pane.
Ideal it doth seem to lie,

With background of the tinted sky.
To think of mortals were not well,
For e'en there might Aurora dwell.

But brightest scenes do shortest stay,
And it has quickly pass'd away.
For even now, the jealous night
Hath robb'd it of its tinted light.
Not long, for quick the night is seen
To fly before its reigning Queen ;
Mountain and castle then are soon
In sight beneath the rising moon.
Tho' they be not distinct and clear,
As by the day they did appear ;
And difficult by lack of light
To trace the castle's form aright ;
Yet when the clouds which drifting play
Shall for a moment clear away,
' T will be then very plain to see,
What it by light of day did be.

So, ere Man, driven out the Gate,
Had fallen from his high estate,

The Sun of Life did make appear
His perfect nature, plain and clear.
Where Woman is, there likewise Sin,
Which to the Garden entered in :
And tho' that Sun of Life had set,
Man's perfect nature lasted yet ;
Like to the castle on the hill,
Unseen by dark, existing still.

But soon the Moon with gentle light
Did enter combat with the Night ;
And by that light, we yet can see
How truly perfect once was he.
For tho' the clouds of Sin did soon
Obscure the brightness of that Moon,
Those clouds, when drifting, ever will
Show perfect man existing still.
But how does man, through all his woes,
This inner, brighter self disclose ?
How know we that a life so fair
Doth have undoubted being there ?
In human minds, do oft have birth,
Bright thoughts of things not of this Earth ;

Of higher, nobler themes they tell,
Than of this life in which we dwell.
Words seem too poor, of these to speak,
A higher, nobler tongue we seek.
Yet who did e'er a mortal find
With hand or tongue to match his mind ?
If flesh and spirit matched, 't would be
Again the perfect man to see.

At times a painter maketh seen,
In measure what his dreams have been.
An orator doth feel full well
That which he thinks, but cannot tell.
And so it is the whole list through,
'T is naught that 's strange, 't is nothing new,
That of our thoughts, the greatest, best,
Are never utter'd nor express'd.

Some bright ideals from afar
Most beautiful when pictured are,
While others would more perfect look,
If made apparent in a book.
What oft the poets' page doth fill,
Were fitter for a painter's skill.



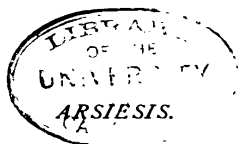
And when of Woman fair we tell,
As shown to us by Fancy's spell,
How can we paint that face aright,
With only colors black and white?
Then to admit—'t is naught but fair—
'The painter hath advantage there.
For mix'd and ready to his hand,
The colors all he can command.
Now oft like this the case may be
(As, reader, you will shortly see),
'That when 't is plainly thus, why then
'The brush is mightier than the pen.
But it would seem these thoughts did stray
From off the subject far away ;
So back from paths which have been ta'en,
To story of the priest again.

He quickly on his mission bound,
Goes through this passage underground—
Which secret pathway, strange to tell,
Had ending in an empty well—
And here to rest he does not stop,
But straightway climbeth to the top ;

After which effort, breathing hard,
He standeth in the palace yard.

In shining armor, spear in hand,
A soldier 'fore the door doth stand ;
So still and motionless is he,
It might an iron figure be.
But when the priest hath drawn near,
He starteth up, and grasps that spear ;
Then quick restores it to its place,
When he does recognize the face ;
Inclines the head, and lowers the eye
Unto him as he passeth by.
At other doors he goeth through,
The sentinels all likewise do,
Till now is curtain'd entrance seen,
The palace proper of the Queen.
Here for a time, by custom's cause,
All men must for a moment pause,
To find if it her pleasure be
The person waiting there to see.
But with this priest 't is other case,
He doth not even slack his pace,

Maketh a motion with the hand
To turban'd slave who there doth stand,
That quickly for him moves aside,
To ope' the 'broider'd curtains wide,
Which passing through, the priest doth seem
Within the regions of a dream :
For sudden on the view did break
What seemed to be a lovely lake ;
Scarcely from Nature tell apart
This wondrous counterfeit of Art,
Whose lovely verdure-cover'd shore
Full many a graceful palm tree bore.
And where did land and lake unite,
Were pebbles of a snowy white ;
Tasteful and pretty here was seen
The contrast of the white and green.
With perfume sweet, and color fair,
Did bloom the water lily there,
While 'neath the water, crystal clear,
Did fish of richest hue appear,
Gliding along with lazy grace,
In keeping with the gorgeous place,
And distance, imitated too,



Did lend its beauty to the view,
As in the twilight far away,
The shades of sunset seemed to stray ;
Whose dying brightness there did fall
Upon a lofty temple wall,
Which, with its little isle, did make
A pretty picture on the lake.
'Most looking on the air to ride,
Stretchèd a bridge from side to side ;
In pretty keeping with the place,
It seemèd made of ivory lace.
On top, on either side, a line
Of gilded lamps in rich design ;
Whose light, as it the shade went through,
Was softened to a roseate hue.
Above the lake, what met the eye ?
And was there then a kind of sky ?
When passer viewed the scene below,
His gaze did seldom upward go ;
So nature-like the scene did lie,
Of course above it was the sky.

Quick moving onward, as before,
The priest sooh pass'd the lakelet o'er.

And 'gain, when he has reached here,
A curtain'd doorway does appear ;
In front of which, on either hand,
A pretty female slave doth stand,
Whose color fair and classic face
Proclaim her of the Grecian race.
A wealth of flowing, silky hair
Falls o'er those pretty shoulders bare ;
While scarce concealed—oh ! well, 't is clear
'Most waste of time to linger here.
But thoughts of woman, through all time,
Did fall so easy into rhyme,
Temptation sore it was to stay,
Not from the subject—away.

Would now some pen of greater might
This portion of the story write ;
With brighter thought and clearer word
The charms of this fair Queen be heard.
Oh, would that Angelo might draw
This perfect form as here he saw !
That graceful Raphael could trace
The charm and beauty in that face !

Then should great Titian here begin
To put his living colors in.
Which masterpiece, when finished, you
Should have presented to your view ;
When with it thou thine eyes hadst fill'd,
Wast by this perfect likeness thrill'd,
Then veil'd it o'er, yet 't would remain
A fair remembrance in thy brain ;
And at this point I 'd take the pen
To try and please thee once again.
Such dreams away ! this cannot be ;
Sweet reader, enter in with me.

'T is place where after burning day
Is driven by the night away,
The dweller in the palace there
May best enjoy the evening air.
Light, fluted columns do uphold
A roof of Saracenic mould,
Which, hollowed out, seems to the eye
Indeed to counterfeit the sky ;
For to the looker's gaze there are
An azure depth and many a star.

A fountain's waters upward bound,
Then fall below with cooling sound,
Which seems to say in language sweet,
"Once parted we are glad to meet."

Enough then of this casket fair,
Speak rather of the jewel there ;
For gems of Art tho' fair to see,
Treasures of Nature fairer be.
Four columns in the hue of gold
A purple canopy uphold,
'Neath which, in all her beauty seen,
Reclines this fair Egyptian Queen.

For one of Oriental race,
How wondrous fair the tint of face ;
What could be sweeter to the eyes,
That perfect form extended lies
In way that woman looketh best,
Her cheek 'gainst lovely hand does rest.
Too pretty far to e'er conceal,
Her robes a tiny foot reveal ;
Like arch of bridge, 'twas arched so,

For 'neath it might the water flow.
That robe, so fine light passeth through
And maketh it of pinkish hue,
Has slipp'd and left her shoulder bare,
With all its charms exposed there.
But, O those eyes a tale do tell !
Her very soul doth in them dwell ;
Those liquid depths do seem to be
Far deeper than the depthless sea.

It look'd as if her thoughts did stray
O'er scenes that took her far away.
And there did seem to be a trace
Of mingled sadness on that face.
But she was young and gentle then,
Knew little of the world and men.
Oh ! couldst thou now thy future see,
Thine eyes, fair Queen, would sadder be.

A slave with feather'd fan stood there,
And o'er her gently stirred the air.
Too tired a longer watch to keep,
A pretty child has fall'n asleep

Who did, perchance, her thoughts inspire
With softened music from the lyre.

It seemed her eyes did watch it, too,
This mental picture that she drew.
From out the place her gaze did stray
To other regions far away ;
For enter'd there, with folded hands,
The priest in perfect silence stands,
Awaiting till she be aware
That he attends her pleasure there.
Howe'er, at length she now doth seem
To rouse her from that waking dream ;
Missing at last the music's sound,
Half rising up she gazeth round,
And smileth, as her look doth meet
The little player at her feet ;
Then seeming to half startl'd be,
She suddenly the priest does see.
And speaking softly, breathes each word,
As wind o'er tuned string is heard ;
While unto him she now doth say
In kindly, most familiar way :

“ Welcome, Arsiesis ; but why keep
So silent, for I did not sleep ;
'T was not thy zeal for me to test,
That made me call thee from thy rest.
A hidden page of Fate I'd see,
Would have thy Goddess ope to me.”
Thus telling that which she did seek,
The priest did then unto her speak :

“ Full well thou knowst, O mighty Queen !
Much is there n'er by mortals seen.
Men little of the Future know,
Until it with the Past does go.
And very easy thou canst see
'T is of the gods a wise decree,
That tho' we with impatience burn
The leaves of Fate to faster turn,
'T is yet alone for them to say,
What cometh with another day.
For if it were that thou couldst see
The pleasure held in store for thee,
As it in Present thou wouldst live,
No joy could then the Future give.

Or otherwise, couldst thou have thy will,
Then 'fore thee see a coming ill,
'T would ever be before thy mind,
And life thou wouldst a desert find.
Of ills the Future sure hath some,
Hadst better leave them till they come."
And here he then his speech did stay,
To listen what the Queen might say.
With eyes cast down, she 'd weighed each word
Of all the saying she had heard,
But now doth quickly raise the head,
As thus unto her priest she said :

" Arsiesis, needless 't is to tell,
That I do think thou'st spoken well.
It is not good that I should try
To in the hidden Future pry.
But in my mind a thought did creep,
Which all night long has banish'd sleep.
It seemèd that I were possess
Of very spirit of unrest,
Which e'er did whisper unto me,
' Ask Isis what thy fate shall be.'

Now Isis it is known full well
Doth like to in my temple dwell ;
While men proclaim it near and far
That you her fav'rite servant are.
And canst thou bring about the task
Of gaining for me what I ask ?
But not in usual way I seek,
To hear her through an image speak.
Some god-like being must appear,
That I it both may see and hear.
And O Arsiesis tell to me
If this is possible to be ! ”

Now as the priest her meaning took,
His face did wear a troubled look ;
And for a time he answer'd naught,
But seemèd deep immers'd in thought,
From which at last he did awake,
And with these words the silence break :
“ Oh ! Cleopatra, 't is my way
To listen well and then obey.
But now I needs must tell to thee
That what thou 'st asked can scarcely be.

To-night I cannot tell to you
What in this thing may Isis do.
But to the temple I'll repair
To seek communion with her there.
And on that day when she is prone
Through me to make her wishes known,
To thee a messenger shall go,
And thou shalt quick these tidings know."

"Arsiesis, plainly do I see
Again thou speakest well to me.
If Isis give to me this sign,
Then mighty honors shall be thine ;
But haste away, for 't is not best
To rob thee of thy rightful rest.
Till this the Goddess shall thee tell,
Good health be thine, and fare thee well."

CANTO III.

BEHOLD yon pretty flow'ring vine
Which gracefully does upward twine;
Each tiny flower to heaven above
Doth cast one perfumed look of love,
As if to thank a Father's care
In giving to it light and air.
But 'most as small, like thread of green,
Its cluster-bearing stem is seen;
Yet in the air it riseth far,
And heavy weight its branches are.
Thick grow the leaves, or thou wouldst see
By staff it doth supported be;
Through all its course, through all its length,
'T is strong but by another strength:
If not this kindly aid 't had found,
Could ne'er rise higher than the ground.
So this to thee may be a sign,
How like is man to clinging vine.

For earliest records do reveal
That men did e'er their weakness feel ;
And then most plainly was it seen
They on a higher power must lean ;
Some helping staff on which to rest,
Whereby to grow and flourish best ;
Which tho' the eye could not declare,
Yet must they feel its presence there.
With it, they 'd rise to fame and worth,
Without it, grovel on the earth.

Mythology doth plainly show
On what supports men's faith did grow.
Perchance, in supplication they
First knelt before some form of clay ;
Or farther when Time's course had run,
They ask'd a blessing of the Sun.
Howe'er this be, 'fore men the light
Burned always brighter with Time's flight.
Yet ere had dawn'd that later day,
The living Sun drove dark away,
Scarce, better faith had there been seen
Than that of which was Isis queen :

Not that low form which history says
Was practised in Pompeian days—
Those “ Days ” which Bulwer did so well
In language and tradition tell
(As reader you will sure agree
If you did e’er those ruins see),
But ’t was a faith which long did stand,
Was born in that Egyptian land ;
Confinéd only to a few
Who then its “ Greater Mysteries ” knew.

In many a nation, far and wide,
Did worship of her long abide ;
And as their own each people claims
That “ Goddess with ten thousand names,”
For whom Arsiesis saw, ’t is true,
He must indeed a wonder do.
And tho’ great labor this did mean,
He most desired to please the Queen.
With little rest was he content ;
His nights in thought and study spent ;
With cunning workmen all the day
Did he now pass his time away ;

Those things he in his brain did feel,
That they might to his eye reveal.

Though modern nations sure that they
Have found it in this latter day,
Ruin and record plainly show
That science flourished long ago ;
And that the priests did use it then
To mystify the minds of men.

The art of making is forgot,
(But that affects the matter not)
Dishes of glass all bright and clear,
On which does no design appear ;
Pour water in and quickly see
There forms of little fishes be.
Tho' strange, it seems beyond a doubt,
The water brings those colors out.
And thus it is with many men,
Who say, " There was no knowledge then."
Clear through the Past they think to look ;
It seemeth like unprinted book.
If of this " empty " Past they care
To see the forms that sure are there,

Pour on't the stream of knowledge clear,
And unto them they 'll quick appear.

And high then did Arsiesis climb
That hill of knowledge in his time.
So with its help, and by his skill,
All aided by the power of will,
Tho' long and tedious was the route,
He hoped to work the problem out.
As oft when gazing on the sky
Where spot of soften'd light doth lie,
Tho' not distinct unto the sight,
We know it is the lesser light.
But only watch, the breezes may
Swift blow those little clouds away,
When clearly and distinctly soon
Is seen the brightly-rising moon ;
And tho' thou saw'st it there did be,
For clouds, thou couldst not plainly see.
So when we seek, with inner sight,
To grasp the form of mental light,
Most from the first are we aware
That it is dim and shadowy there ;

But other thoughts before it go,
We can't its true proportions know ;
At last like clouds they drift away,
And we do see it clear as day.
All by the priest at length is seen,
So thus he writes unto his Queen :

“ O Cleopatra great ! The task which thou
Didst set for me was difficult, most
Difficult indeed. Great Isis did I
Long entreat with many a prayer and
Sacrifice, till she did listen unto
Me, and now hath granted thy request. I 'll
Tell thee what thou e'en must do if thou thy
Fate wouldst hear. When next—which is
three days from
Hence—the moon shall cast her new-born
brightness
O'er the earth, then to the temple come, at
Middle time of night, and thou shalt see and
Hear what will indeed be most surprising.
All well with thee till then. Thy faithful
priest, Arsiesis.”

Three times the sun in glory bright
Had said unto the earth good night ;
Three times did he in darkness stay
To brighter make the coming day ;
It nearly then the hour did be
Her future for the Queen to see.
And so for her the priest did wait,
Standing beside the temple gate ;
When suddenly those lights appear
Which told him that the Queen drew near.
The guards did pause, no word was said,
And then the priest with bended head,
Alone conducted her below,—
None other there could with her go.

'Twas dark ; no sound disturb'd the air ;
It seem'd no living thing was there.
The quiet seemèd to portent
The coming of some great event.
At last before the altar, they—
When pausing, thus the priest did say,
“ O Queen ! the Goddess told to me,
That thou alone must present be.

And now 't is meet that I do go,
As none but thee thy fate can know."
Then Cleopatra left alone,
Doth kneel upon that floor of stone,
And prayeth, that the sign she 'll see,
May tell her life will happy be.

How lovely is she kneeling there,
With that sad sweet, expectant air.
Like tinted cloud at break of day,
The rich blood to her cheek doth stray ;
Those speaking eyes seem wondrous bright,
Excitement to them lendeth light.
Thy pretty ways, bewitching grace,
Compare most fitly with thy face.
Ay ! truly men might say to you,
"Thou'rt Venus and Minerva too";
A deity must heartless be
Who could refuse kind fate to thee.
But jealousy, no less than love,
Is found in all, below, above.
And so it would have seemèd best
If thou thy case hadst e'en let rest

With god, not goddess, then O Queen !
Thou might'st a brighter page have seen.
No harsher judgments women know,
Than those which from their sex do go.

But now in manner slow, yet strange,
This darkness curtained scene doth change.
A soften'd misty light now there
Pervades the temple ev'rywhere.
E'en as the slow, diffusèd light
Of daybreak doth absorb the night,
No single spot its birth doth know,
It seemeth everywhere to go ;
Like smile upon an infant's face
Its source is difficult to trace.
And over head, tho' 'neath the ground,
A shining firmament is found ;
Where, like as seen upon the sky,
Each star and constellation lie.
And growing with the light more clear,
Soft waves of sound break on the ear ;
As if a gentle breeze did stray
O'er soft Æolian harps to play.

The darkness, fled all things so bright,
That temple fairly glows with light ;
For scroll and border seem to shine,
As if all drawn in fiery line ;
And each traced mark that 's there to see,
Looks even now to burning be ;
While softest voices fill the air,
And sweetly sing this little prayer :—

“ Isis sov'reign of the gods,
Mistress of the murm'ring sea,
Who through time each nation lauds,
Thus we sing to thee.

Queen of spirits after death,
Older than existing time,
Who dost give the living breath,
Thou we praise sublime.

Worship'd e'en by many a name,
That the diff'rent tongues do call,
Yet unto the world the same,
Isis, Queen of all.

Hark to Cleopatra's prayer,
Let a happy fate be seen,
Void of sorrow, free from care,
Isis bless our Queen."

As sound with light here seems to stay,
It with that light doth pass away ;
And in the distance seems to die,
The very shadow of a sigh.
But see, a spot of gilded air
Doth hang above the altar there !
While with a motion sure yet slow,
Does it in form and brightness grow.
And on that brighten'd beam of air
A perfect form now standeth there ;
So bright and lovely 't is to see,
It might indeed fair Iris be.
Ay, there she stands, enchanting sight !
A pretty spirit born of light.
A form on which the eye to feast—
Thou hast indeed done well, O Priest !

The kneeling Queen in deep amaze,
Scarce' on this vision dares to gaze.

With bended head she doth await,
The words which shall contain her fate.
A wave of life, as if of air
Pervades that spirit standing there ;
A look of living doth replace
The passive, on that form and face.
Then soft as twilight in the West,
Her gaze upon the Queen doth rest.
A voice like sighing sea is heard
Which seems to breathe, not speak, each word :

“Queenly Isis did me send,
Princess, unto thee ;
To her saying now attend,
Hearken unto me.

Thou a stormy future hast,
Like to raging wave ;
Thou o’er men thy charms shalt cast
Making each thy slave.

And degrade what men call love,
In ambition’s cause ;

False to all below, above,
Downward without pause.

Finally thy life will make,
Torture in thy mind ;
Then it in thy hand thou'lt take,
Rest that thou mayst find."

When these solemn words were said,
Still she knelt with bended head,
Like as if too great a task,
For at once her mind to grasp.
But at length it seemeth clear ;
All its terrors do appear ;
Then with one despairing sigh
Senseless on her face doth lie.
Nature's pity doth prevail,
O'er her living draws a veil.

Woman's lot is far from worst,
Blessed with pretty face—not curst.
Tho' her mind can scarcely stray
Higher than the Dance or Play,

Lack of brain cannot confer,
Least unhappiness on her.
Nothing knowing, she doth go,
Thinking she does all things know.
Should she chance to suffer wrong,
Sorrow cannot hold her long.
Great is the mind which grief and pain,
Can thereunto an entrance gain.
Not so pleasant is her path
She who mind for beauty hath.
Then her life is one long sigh,
That she 's displeasing to the eye.

But most unhappy of her race,
When curs'd with beauty, wit, and grace.
Yes, made for love and loving, she,
When love doth pain and sorrow be.
If woman beauty hath alone,
This to her foes will e'er atone,
The feeling that the dart will hit
To say, "Yes, beauty, but no wit."
But hath she both, then it is fate
Her enemies will ever hate.

Ay ! foes from out the moral mud,
Yea even of her flesh and blood.
When man acts thus, 't is plain to tell,
All devils do not live in hell.
But why the wrongs of Woman dream ?
The thought is foreign to the theme.

Like unto many of his race
The priest well read the human face.
And thus he very plain' could see,
Her lot would never happy be.
How often doth it happen so,
That men the Future seem to know.
And the fame then spreadeth far
That they very prophets are.
Yet these coming things they find,
By the aid of human mind.

Like when ripple soft doth make,
Stir on surface of a lake,
Life which banished was by pain .
Stealeth o'er the Queen again.
Then she rising, seeking air,
Sees Arsiesis standing there.

Not a word doth either say,
Strangely silent both are they.
No thought does she by word reveal ;
Seeming to only think and feel
All that dark and gloomy fate,—
Then they reach the temple gate.
But ere she doth go away,
'Turning to the priest does say,
" Clear it is unto my view,
That thy warning words were true.
Let that Future, mortals' friend,
Keep her secrets to the end.
But 't is easy to be wise,
When our folly 's 'fore our eyes.
And it ever hath been so,
We never know until we know."
Then with a look well nigh of pain,
She seeks her palace once again.

CANTO IV.

SOON o'er the land the news doth go,
And each Egyptian seems to know
How, through the priest, the goddess e'en
Hath shown great wonders to the Queen.
This priest, all men are quick to see,
A fav'rite with the gods must be ;
While highest honor, mighty fame,
Attach unto Arsiesis' name.

Now casual glance does scarce reveal
All this religion did conceal ;
But maketh think that they alone
Did worship gods of wood and stone,
Like to those imitators, they
Who thought to steal this faith away,
Those Romans who did oft avow
As 'fore some image they did bow,
They did believe, they did declare

That it was Isis standing there.
Ay ! even that the stone did live,
That she to it did being give.

Like boy who through some garden goes,
Pauseth to pluck a blooming rose ;
Which, knowing that he hath no right,
Does quickly then put out of sight.
Yet when the time shall come about
That he will think to draw it out,
Then, tho' its form may still be fair,
He 'll find but little odor there.
Yes, he did steal that rose, 't is true,
But could not steal its perfume too ;
And e'en has left, as he doth find,
The spirit of that flower behind.
So when they thought, 't would easy be
To take that faith across the sea,
Tho' this they did with wondrous care,
They left its very spirit there.

Perchance a Roman thus would say :
"Thy ancient gods now with us stay.

Our priests Osiris did invoke,
And straightway then his image spoke."
Now when such words as these were said,
Th' Egyptian priests did shake the head
And then this mystic answer give,
"Our gods ne'er on the Earth did live."

By images, at first, 't was meant
The gods unseen to represent,
(Which in our day 't is plain to see
That it doth very dangerous be,)
As emblems they were soon forgot,
And then were things which they were not.
So thus it was the knowledge true
Was then confined to the few ;
And superstitions they did wield
Did to the priests great power yield.

Tho' happiness, like unto flowers,
Doth flourish oft 'neath Fortune's showers,
Yet with the priest it seemed instead
That joy from out his life had fled.
And thus 't had been e'er since the night



When Cleopatra saw that sight,
And in that mighty house of stone,
They had together stood alone.
Since then Arsiesis' friends do see
That he a changed man doth be.
Tho' e'er inclined to study, yet
Pleasures of life did ne'er forget ;
And in the social world did find
Oft relaxation for the mind.

All gone those happy looks he had ;
Seemeth he now both worn and sad ;
While scarcely does he ever stray
From out the temple walls away.
The Queen is quick this change to see,
And asketh what the cause may be ;
He answereth that his nights are spent
In gazing on the firmament,
Devising means that will declare
Those mysteries which are hidden there.
'That sleepless nights, 't was nothing strange,
On human faces work a change ;
And tho' this saying sounded well,

In fact 't was only made to tell,
Since all night long he could be found
Within his room beneath the ground,
Where if he aught of stars did find,
Alone must see them in his mind.
Ah ! 't was not star, but rather sigh,
With which he made his nights go by ;
Yet none conjectured in the least
What cause it was did vex that priest.

By spirit of what grief possest,
Which thus doth rob of him his rest ?
What in good fortune can he see
That maketh him so changéd be ?
By all the gods below, above,
Methinketh that he is in love !
With whom, with what, or does it mean
Arsiesis dares to love his Queen ?
Oh ! is there aught beneath the sky
To which man fears to lift the eye,
E'en though it hath to fall again,
When love works mischief in the brain ?
If this be true, 't is reason e'en,

The why a priest may love a queen.
Then let us seek if this be so,
If he doth love the Queen, or no.

But human love ; what is that thing
They say such joy to man doth bring ?
Which, tho' it hath lived ages through,
Does ever seem so fresh and new.
The question this reply gives birth,
A quaint device to fill the earth.
And man in love—O mournful sight !
Can for the time not see aright,
But wanders through the darkness far,
And thinks a fire-fly is a star.
Each muddy pool he doth mistake
In calling it a lovely lake.
Yet world around doth see full well
That black from white he cannot tell ;
But for that world he deeply sighs,
'Cause they be fools while he is wise.

Like sailor, thinking he doth stand
Far out to sea, away from land,

But by the morning light does see
The white-capp'd breakers on his lee,
Then knows his reck'ning did misstate,
But knoweth when it is too late.
And like to him, that man above
Who tried to sail by chart of love ;
He findeth, when the light is seen,
Less wise than he did think hath been.

Some men who in their minds give place
To naught but love for form and face ;
Tho' rarely, yet a few we find
Who love ideals of the mind.
Arsiesis, as it came to pass,
Was even of this latter class.
For tho' most men the world has seen
At once would madly love that Queen,
The priest, who had of both the sight,
Did love that pretty thing of light,
Who e'en to Cleopatra spoke,
And unto her that warning broke.

Now is there not an inner voice
Which guideth man unto a choice,

That when some maiden he does see,
Can say at once, "She pleaseth me"?
It seemeth a decree of Fate,
That each shall in his brain create
A fair ideal of the mind ;
Then he its counterpart must find.
And more or less in love he 'll be,
As e'en those maidens he doth see
Bear to the mind resemblance plain,
To this creation of his brain.
Many who o'er this world do go
Yet this resemblance never know ;
But while through life their steps they bend,
Seek these ideals to the end.

And now Arsiesis pines and sighs
For spirit form he did devise,
Which but for Queen would e'er remain
Unknown, quiescent in his brain.
Ha ! spiteful Cupid had a care
To let him know its presence there.

How, how could man with strength of mind
Himself so all deluded find ?



Fair reader, must thou truly own
The dream of love thou well hast known.
Perchance the while thou plain couldst see
The object did unworthy be.
Thy parents cravéd wealth or fame,
And thou need'st get it with the name.
Yet for what thou a vice didst deem,
Thou wouldst awaken from thy dream.
Oh ! most unhappy was thy part
'Twixt battles of the mind and heart.
Thou knew'st full well what thou wouldst do,
Yet doing did fly far from you.
And then thou saidst : " It is not well ;
I can, I will shake off this spell.
'T is clear as light, now do I see
This loving is not well for me.
Ah ! it is o'er, again I'm strong ;
Now Future come, the Past was wrong ! "
Yet when most sure thy love was o'er,
Thou loved'st more madly than before.
And so this priest did try full well
With all his strength to break that spell ;
But found it closely to his mind

Did silken threads of fancy bind ,
Tho' banished in the morn from sight
E'en was it there again at night.
And longed he once again to see
How fair to sight that form did be ;
But, tho' sore tempted, must forbear
To call that shining vision there ;
For as a priest such vows did take,
He would not, must not, dared not break.
Tho' many things he e'en might do,
Deceiving Queen and people too,
Still this his conscience did applaud,
Since done in service of a god.
That evil deeds might oft be wise,
If from that evil good did rise.
But then would he these powers abuse,
If for himself that power did use.
And did he not these promptings heed,
'T would then be sacrilege indeed.

Days which are present short do last,
Then join Time's graveyard, called the Past.
Tho' not forever buried they,

But even till that Judgment Day,
When they their being shall renew ;
And pass along in grand review ;
Yea, as they solemnly march by
Beneath that awful Judge's eye,
Then all those secrets will they tell
These buried days have kept so well ;
Once more will each man live again
His life for joy, perchance for pain.

Thus as each day flew quick and fast
To join those legions of the Past,
Arsiesis, now weighed down by care,
Would with them lay his troubles there.
That once strong man pale as the dead,
All charm in life for him had fled ;
Whilst fire which burned in his mind
Its fuel in his frame did find ;
From marks of suffering ill repress
It seemed ere long he 'd be at rest.

One fateful night, resolve is ta'en
That shining form to see again.

And in that darken'd house of stone
Her will he see, unwatch'd, alone.
So once again she bright and clear
Above that altar doth appear.
And then the priest with awe-struck face
Approacheth near unto that place ;
With look which speaketh joy, amaze,
Doth he upon that picture gaze.

O that to speech there did belong
Some word which were than gaze more strong !
Ne'er was a word yet found in book
Which half described that yearning look.
'Cause, all his feeling most intense
He needs express by single sense ;
All, all love for that thing of light
Indeed must concentrate in sight.

Too weak to stand he seems to grow,
And on his bended knee doth go.
That look, all too intense to stay,
Like scenes in slumber fades away.
Ah ! yes ; that very look now flies,

Taking life with it through his eyes ;
Seems pass'd into that form so fair,
To find a happier dwelling there.
Now all is o'er, his day is past,
Peace hath unto him come at last.
Farewell, O priest ! where'er you be,
Oh ! mayst thou there contentment see.

Sweet Dawn, which is the smile of Day,
Did o'er the face of Morning 'play ;
A smile which seem'd to grow more bright,
As gazing on the fleeing Night
E'en taking with it, as it flies,
The touch of Slumber from all eyes.
Life for the world begins once more ;
Its sweet oblivion is o'er.

The priests whom in the temple walls
Their daily duty early calls
Did see Arsiesis kneeling there,
As if he sought the gods in prayer.
The minutes pass'd, his place he kept,
They thought it were perchance he slept.

Ah ! right were they, it was that sleep
That weary mortals long do keep.
And nearing him, did raise his head,
Then knew they that the light had fled.

With one accord, these priests began
To say, " O great and pious man !
Yea even 'fore the altar there
He hath breathed out his life in prayer."
And when they 're sure that this is so,
The news unto the Queen doth go.

As when doth cross the sky at night
The rolling flame of Northern Light,
Surprise, then sorrow, each has place
Upon that most expressive face.
Her fav'rite priest hath gone indeed,
And she is left to feel his need.
Long in such thoughts she doth not live,
But quickly does the order give :
" Let there at once for him have place,
Those solemn honors of his race ;
Let all those mystic rites be there

Which men for burial prepare.
And unto me it seemeth best
He should beneath that altar rest.
Ay, let him in the temple dwell,
Amid those scenes he loved so well.
And from that temple let them take
All things that it a temple make.
The earth from it which has been ta'en
• Let them restore to Earth again.
Then close it up unto the door ;
Make all as solid as before."

And this was done in manner grand,
According to the Queen's command.
 • • • • •

Long time hath glided since that day,
The mighty city pass'd away.
Tho' once all things were bright and fair,
Now is there naught but ruin there.
Traces of temple are no more,
The desert sands have strewn them o'er ;
But still beneath them, buried deep,

Arsiesis and his secret keep.
But clear in distance to the eye
That Pyramid still tow'reth high,
And ever watch to keep does seem
Above that spot where he doth dream ;
That monument of stone sublime
Seemeth as lasting e'en as Time,
To stand far into Future dim,
A grand memorial to him.

THE END.

TRIFLES IN — —

“Trifles, light as air.”

It was intended to have called this portion of the work “Trifles in Verse,” but finding that a volume of poems has been published under that name, and not caring to be brought up for an infringement of copyright, it is begged that the reader will fill up the blank in the title with whatever word may seem proper.

THE LOVERS : A FRAGMENT.

Orvaldo :

A lovely night, a quiet night and still, not
E'en the faint suspicion of a sound to
Render less the silence. All is calm ; calm
As the conscience of a maiden pure, too
Young by far to know of any sin, scarce old
Enough to dream of sorrows yet to come,
Which like to clouds as they drift by may dim
Life's sunshine. How fair beneath the moon
this

Pretty mountain dell,—a volume bound in
Silver and in green,—like unto lands which
Have creation in the poet's mind, where
Nymphs, faries, beings of the world unseen,
Do hold their nightly sports. A fitting stage
Whereon to act a scene from Nature's
Wondrous drama—Love. But hark ! for now the

Silvery voices of the village chimes do name
The hour. The night hath grown to middle age.
Time and a maiden's promise do converge,
For she hath said, at midnight will I meet
With thee, and now 't is past the hour of twelve.
I pray thee lend her speed, O Love, to haste
Her here to me !

Alicia :

Greeting to thee, Orvaldo. I did not
Wait for Love to lend me speed, but took I
Speed from love ; and quickly made less far that
Distance which was betwixt myself and thee.
But art thou glad to see me once again ?
And tho' I have been absent from thine eyes,
Tell me, have I found haven in thy thoughts ?
For 't is indeed ordained a test of love,
That if it is thou really, truly lov'st,
An absence from thine heart's desire will give
Thee pain. There' s little joy in love, when what
Thou carest for is absent from thy gaze.
Then tell me, hast thou miss'd me, art thou glad
That I am here, am with thee once again ?

Orvaldo :

Like violets tortured by the summer's
Heat, with heads low-drooping toward the earth as
If they pray'd for rain, do gladly greet the
Fresh'ning show'r, imbibe new life beneath
The rain-drops' touch, take up their perfumed being
Once again, and joyfully live on,
So 't is with me : as longer I am from
Thee, in same degree doth life become an
Effort. Yet when the time hath come again,
That I do in thy presence stand, like to
Those little flowers refresh'd by rain, new
Life comes o'er me like a flood, and once more
I most joyfully live on.

Alicia :

As I did certain know how thou wouldst speak,
So hast thou spoken. But then thou asketh,
If I did feel all certain of thy love,
That thou hadst let me enter in thine heart,
And to assure me quite none other there
Should dwell, hadst locked the door and thrown
away

The key ; I say, thou asketh why it is,
If I had all this knowledge in advance,
I ask'd thee, didst thou love me. Dost thou
know ?

Orvaldo :

It needs me to confess, O fair Alicia !
The why thou ask'd me what thou hast is not
O'er clear to me. Perchance I'd answer best
If I did say that thou hast ask'd me what
Thou didst already know full well, because
Thou art a woman ; and as a reason
For a woman's whim is e'er past finding
Out, so likewise is the motive for thy
Question.

Alicia :

I pray thee list, Orvaldo :
And hast thou seen—but I well know thou hast—
How doth the Swiss, most cunning workman he,
On tiny scale, in ivory or in wood,
Make counterfeit of buildings, with roof and

Floor, window and door complete in each
Detail? Yet pretty as this tiny structure
Is, and fair to look upon, its fragile
Floors would surely crush beneath thy weight.
And like to this are woman's thoughts and fancies.
For tho' their fragile structure may not bear
That heavy weight which men do Reason call,
Like to the tiny houses of the Swiss,
So are they things of beauty, which in a
Way do serve a purpose, and a mission fill.

Orvaldo :

My fairest love, tell me what thou wouldst say ;
For tho' I perfectly do hear thy words,
The thing which thou wouldst have me understand
Is not quite clear to me.

Alicia :

I 'll make it clear as noonday ; list to me :
'T is sweeter far than music ever drawn
By player skill'd from instrument of string,
To listen to thee while thou say'st, I love
Thee.

Orvaldo :

O mine Alicia ! if at this present time
That Power above who to me being gave
Should e'en see fit unto himself to take
That life again, then would I say with my
Expiring breath, I had not lived in vain,
Since I had done, by thought or word, some-
thing
That well did please thee.
But tell me, loved one, thou art sad to-night.
Most times thy face, thy ways, thy words are all
So bright, thou seemest to think in sunshine.
But on this night it would appear thy mind
Did surely in a shadow move ; each look,
Each word seems darken'd by that shadow. So
Tell me, pray, what ill hath come to thee. I
Would a portion of thy sorrow bear, and
Make thy burden lighter.

Alicia :

Most truly dost thou read the human face,
Orvaldo !

Orvaldo :

Ay ! well can I or any other read,
When kindly Love lends clearness to the sight.

Alicia :

Then hearken while unto thee I do tell
Why shade not sunshine 's on my face to-night.
Scarce have I travell'd on the road of Life
As yet a fourth the distance ; still do I
Think, and thinking try to solve the problems
Of existence and of love. So it doth
Seem to me, and it so seeming I believe
That for all joy that in this life we see,
So in this life must we for all that joy,
In pain make equal payment. And oft as
In the twilight I do sit alone—not
Lonesome, for my thoughts of thee do keep me
Company—then do I see how fair a
Picture is this life, when Love doth be the
Artist. But as I think some day for all
This joy I 'll pay the price in sorrow, that
Sunny picture disappears, and naught but
Gloom remains.

Orvaldo :

Alicia, well do I think those of this
World, of sorrow have full share. But then thou
Well dost know that written in the Holy
Book is this express command, to take no
Thought of ills that are to come until they
Have existence. Dost thou the less enjoy
A sunny day, 'cause in the distant future
Rain must come ? 'T would be the height of
folly.

Then let 's not mar the dream in which we live
By seeking to awaken.

Alicia :

As I most anxious am to be convinced,
Thy words do bear to me conviction full.
But I am young, Orvaldo, and little
Know that science of the heart in which I
Think thee skill'd. Then let me ask thee more,
for
I shall love thee more when I know why I
Love thee.

Orvaldo :

Sweetheart, I prithee ask me what thou wilt,
And tho' the truth shall be not to my gain,
'Fore Heav'n I 'll answer truly.

Alicia :

I do believe that thou dost love me so,
That thou hast e'en forgot all thought of self,
And wilt deal by me truly. Then let me ask
If all my love for thee will greater grow
As life more short becomes, or think'st thou will
It lessen ?

Orvaldo :

The question which thou asketh me, like all
Which seek to gaze upon what 's yet to come
And make the future present, indeed is
Difficult to answer ; yet thus to me
It seems : Should this same Future prove my friend,
Showing in me some noble qualities
Of such a kind as women do admire
In men, then thou wilt surely love me more ;

But if it chance to be that fondly thou
Dost overestimate, and what thou think'st
Is gold Time's touch will tarnish, and unto
Thee show a baser metal,—if this shall
Come to pass, as surely as the wind from
Where it listeth blows, so surely wilt thou
Love me less.

Alicia :

Thy words, Orvaldo, wake no fears in me,
Create no apprehension in my breast.
And here doth be the diff'rence 'twixt the love
Of woman and of man : For when a man
Doth see a fault in her he loves, his love
Then lesser grows. Poor kind of love be this !
But when those (whom it pleaseth men to call
The weaker vessel) see defects in those
For whom most earnestly they care, then does
That love in ev'ry way increase and grow ;
And by this means, hiding defects from sight,
Loveth she then the more.
But while in this cold way we do discuss
The nature and the bound'ries of our love,

I pray that thou wilt tell me, if thou can'st,
Art thou the one that I will always love ;
Or may another stray upon the scene,
And to him bind my fancy ?

Orvaldo :

Alicia, dost thou, canst thou, love, expect
A pretty fleecy cloud, which like unto
A thistle-down, appears suspended from
The Summer sky,—I say again, canst thou
Expect this airy thing to motionless
Remain ? Thou need'st not answer, for well do
I know thou dost not. And so is human
Love like to that Summer cloud ; thou dost not
Know when wind may come and bear away that
Cloud. No more canst tell when circumstance will
Rise to waft thy love from where it rests, to
Regions more preferr'd.

Alicia :

Tho' I have heard each word that thou hast said,
Thy meaning is not over clear to me.
I prithee speak more plainly.

Orvaldo :

Then will I clothe my thoughts in other form,
And my ideas put into such a shape
That them thou canst not fail to understand.
Perchance thou wandereth through some palace
On whose walls do hang fair thoughts of artists,
Made apparent to the eye on canvas ;
And listlessly thou passest many by,
Till now at last thine eye doth rest on one
Which well doth please thy fancy, and thou say'st :
A fairer picture than the one I see
Were all impossible for brush to trace.
Thou wanderest on, and still another
Emblem of the painter's skill doth strike thy
Fancy ; thou dost say : O lovely painting !
None other I admire excepting thee.
Thy former choice is all forgotten, since
Thou hast found this treasure. And so in love :
Thou think'st none other canst thou love, save him
Who is by you selected. But mark me :
There do be others in the world thou wilt
Love more than him, if Fate decree that thou
Shalt see them.

Alicia :

I've listen'd and well do I understand
All things which thou hast said, and this I say :
Now let the Future come, I fear it not.
But why load Love with logic ? Full as well,
And equally as wise, striving with links
Of steel the fitting humming-bird to bind.
Then let us pass the hour in converse more
Congenial to the time and place—
What sayest thou ?

Orvaldo :

Most gladly I agree.

* * * * *

Orvaldo :

Alas ! how wearily the hours drag on
When earthly sorrows present with us be,
And we'd fain have the time go quickly by.
But when some pleasure doth the moments fill,
And we do long that Time delay his steps,
Passing not by so quickly, then seems it



That the hours do fairly fly, as if those
Hours were ever jealous of the joy that
We experience. * * *

How fast the night has flown ! we needs must part.
Behold ! fair one, the darkness wellnigh gone,
And even now the Dawn, like maiden blushing
That the world should see her self-disclosed
Loveliness, glides o'er the sky fast in the
Footsteps of retreating Night. And when the
Queen of dark next from her exile comes, which
Is not long time hence, then shall we—

Alicia :

Meet again.

Orvaldo :

I pray thee now, make me thy debtor more,
And give me one last kiss for our—

Alicia :

Farewell.

THE COVETOUS.


IULL many a lay,
Of ancient day,
A story doth unfold
Of men who were to dragons turn'd
For thirsting after gold.

With eyes of fire
Loud breathing ire,
Did near their treasure live ;
To mortals who would steal their wealth
Destruction they might give.

In modern day
It still doth stay,
A shadow of the past ;
In which for riches some do grope,
And finding, hold them fast.

In form and face
No change hath place,
Yet plain the mind doth see,
The inner man in spirit changed,
They very dragons be.

THE NANCY LEE.

 H ! she had the tide,
And the wind was fair,
While now, from her moorings free,
She parted the spray
From her briny way,
As she glided her course
Down the sunlit bay,
The pretty ship Nancy Lee.

And a merry song
Did the sailors sing,
As they on the ropes did haul:
“Blow, blow, ye winds, blow,
And make Nancy know
That over the waters
She swiftly must go.”
Right gaily thus sang they all.

And no braver man,
On sea or on shore,
Than her captain could you find ;
But his face did wear
A sorrowful air ;
He thought of that maiden
So young and so fair,
That sweetheart he 's left behind.

And the breeze held strong,
She has reached the sea ;
Now the pilot waves his hand,
Climbs over the side
Where his skiff doth ride,
Says drifting astern
With the wind and tide :
" God speed to a distant land."

Where sky doth meet water
Now sun kisseth both,
Tips with gold each wavy crest ;
Seems longing to stay,
Loth to go away

♦



From this scene he has
Painted in colors so gay,
Then sinks in the Ocean's breast.

Now starry-crown'd Night,
In darken'd attire,
As seeming to mourn for Day,
Glides over the deep,
Gives the tired ones sleep,
To all save the few
Who the watch do keep
While the Nancy sails her way.

The captain doth rest,—
'T is his watch below,—
And sweetly does he dream
That walking beside
His own promised bride ;
Says, " I love thee alone
In this world so wide,"
As they stray by a murmuring stream.

Sleep, mariner, sleep,
And enjoy thy dream,

For thy rest will soon be o'er ;
May Heav'n create
What thy thoughts relate,
That it thou mayst live
In that future state,
When thou wak'st on the other shore.

But the night grows cold,
For the Ice King breathes
A fog o'er the ocean's face,
And the risen cloud,
Like unto a shroud,
Hangeth damp and cold
O'er the Nancy proud,
But the good ship holds her pace.

“ Hard down with your helm ! ”
Too late, too late,
Crash ! into the berg she goes.
Oh ! alas, alas !
'Gainst the icy mass
Her bow doth snap off
Like the brittle glass ;
Into her the ocean flows.

From sleep into death,
'T is an awful change ;
Oh ! a sad, sad thing to see
Man ta'en unaware,
Mid his dreams so fair,
Not time to breathe unto
His Maker a prayer ;
May Heaven most merciful be !

Now she sinks from sight
With a rushing sound,
As like to the Ocean's wail ;
And Fate doth save
From a watery grave
One man in a boat
There adrift on the wave,
To carry this mournful tale.

Thus 't is oft that man
Doth embark his hopes,
For the Isle of Wealth to sail ;
And away they glide
With a fav'ring tide,

While fortune is lending
Her breezes beside ;
And ne'er do they think to fail.

Like as waters do ebb,
And waters do flow,
Good fortune and bad there be ;
The bark which doth bear
These hopes so fair
Meets a barrier great
That none knew was there,
And goes down like the Nancy Lee.

WOMAN.

“**I**’M thine for life,
I will be true
As needle to the star,”
She saith to-day ;
Ere morning grav
Her promised love
May from thee stray—
How fickle Women are !

“ In thee I live,
Through thee I breathe,
There all my pleasure find.”
Tho’ chance ’t may be,
’T is plain to thee,
E’er changeful as
The wind-kiss’d sea
Is ever Woman’s mind.

“ For wealth and fame
And prince's name
Ne'er would I change my lot.”
Trust tides that flow,
Aught else below.
Ay! e'en thy harvests
Ere they grow,
But trust a Woman not.

A child of change,
Say what thou wilt,
Choose her from near or far •
And try in vain,
Canst not explain,
True as the Truth
These words remain :
How fickle Women are.

CHARITY.

QUINLY a poor old man ;
All o'er whose tatter'd coat so thin
The wind doth have free entrance in ;
He hopes some will a penny give,
For he must beg if he would live.

With ragged hat in hand ;
Perchance some Christian passer-by
Will cast on him a pitying eye ;
For on that wrinkl'd face does stray
The sunlight of a brighter day.

A hungry little dog ;
Who never from his side does go,
But watcheth there through weal and woe ;
Is still a friend, all others gone,
Content to love and hunger on.

Cometh a haughty dame ;
Robed in many a silk'n fold,
With sparkling gem and bands of gold ;
She who in luxury doth live
Sure will to him some trifle give.

Thus humbly doth he speak :
This day I have not tasted bread ;
There scarce is where to lay my head ;
Kind lady, I would grateful be
A penny to receive from thee.

Only a haughty glance ;
Think'st thou I 'll feed when on the street
Each beggar I do chance to meet ?
What are thy wants, old man, to me ?
The city should provide for thee.

No murmur doth he make ;
The little dog does look a sigh,
And casts on him a pitying eye,
As they together patient wait,
To find in some a kinder fate.

Cometh a little child ;
With golden hair, and laughing eye,
Whose tint seems borrow'd from the sky ;
Her merry laugh, her pretty way,—
A beam of sunshine let astray.

She sudden seeth him ;
A look of pity hath a place
Upon that sweet and childish face.
“ Oh, mamma, see that poor old man !
I 'd like to help him all I can.”

A little silver piece ;
“ Take it,” the pretty creature said,
“ And, poor old man, go get some bread ;
But mind, it is not all for you,
The little dog must have some too.”

“ God bless thee little maid ! ”
Seemed all the words that he could speak ;
A tear flow'd down that wither'd cheek ;
He did a silent blessing say,
Then turn'd aside and went his way.

How great is charity !
Each from his store some mite may give
To help a fellow-creature live.
Through ages will the record stay
To cheer him at the latter day.

SONG.

SWEETHEART, sweetheart, tell me truly,
Wilt thou ever constant be?
When the rolling seas divide us,
Wilt thou still be true to me?

Wilt thou find some other lover
Who 'll be with thee day by day,
And when I am far, far from thee
Lead my darling's heart astray?

Sweetheart, darling, tell me quickly,
Say I have not loved in vain,
And you 'll not forget me absent
Till I come to thee again.

GENEVA.

I WAS on a sunny Sabbath afternoon ;
Nature without did look so bright and fair,
I hasten'd forth her beauties I might view,
Imbibe new being with the Autumn air.

Quickly the confines of the town are pass'd,
Now cross the pathway o'er yon rushing stream,
Climb to the top that little mountain hill,
Forget the world, and for a moment dream.

How sweet is freedom in its ev'ry form !
And so thy gaze, all unimpeded, free,
Wanders o'er beauties of the distant view ;
That freedom giveth pleasure unto thee.

A lovely landscape lieth there below
In gorgeous colors, like a flag unfurled ;

Lake, mountain, foliage by the Autumn touched,
'T is e'en a pretty fraction of the world.

Once mighty Cæsar and his Roman band
Did wander where now rise those walls of gray ;
Calvin and Luther did reform the land,
And men were taught they to their God should
prayer.

As if from out its place above the earth
Had downward fall'n a piece of Summer sky,
So, stretching to the distance far away,
Leman doth in its azure beauty lie.

Like runners striving hard to reach the goal,
By side the Aarve and Rhone there rush along,
Whose clear and muddy floods do sep'rate stay,
As difficult to mix as right and wrong.

And cold hath kiss'd the mountain top with snow,
The sun doth make it seem a snow of gold,
All strewn with gorgeous diamonds, sparkling bright,
Like one doth read in fairy tales of old.

That mighty Artist whom men call the Sun
Maketh with magic touch the snow crests pink,
While ev'ry minute deeper grows the hue
As he into his western couch doth sink.

Nature's fair picture fadeth fast from sight,
Vanish'd the scene,—'t is needless now to stay,
Each moment doth the landscape darker grow,
And put on mourning for the passing Day.

GENEVA, Nov., '80.

A DREAM.

WHILE sleeping, it to me did seem
I wandered by a murmuring stream,
Upon whose borders did there stand
A lovely castle vast and grand ;
But seeking for foundation stone,
I sought in vain, for there was none.
Just then a gentle passing breeze
Did touch the foliage of the trees,
And looking toward that castle fair,
Then saw I naught but ruin there.
That breath of air, so quick begun,
Blew dome and column into one ;
While there was naught unto the eye
Save a faint spot upon the sky.

This very strange to me did seem ;
A castle fair beside a stream,

Which, looking strong enough to stay,
A breath of air did blow away.
At last the meaning did appear,
As if on sky 't were written clear :
Poor mortals one doth often find
Who build vast fabrics with the mind ;
On no foundation they remain,
Save on some mirage of the brain.
But then a wand'ring breeze of Fate
Blows on that structure soon or late,
And, like to castle by the stream,
They find it all was but a dream.

A FANCY.

THE Icy King, whose throne is at that spot,
A ne'er reached point, which men do call
the Pole,
Did south'ard ride, borne by his Northern Wind
Alike o'er mountains and where seas do roll.

As passing by, all Nature own'd his power,
Each mighty tree did lowly bend the head ;
The painting of the landscape, living green,
Beneath his heatless touch lay whiten'd, dead.

He travell'd on, and swift before him flew
His rival, e'en that Monarch call'd heat,
Who sought the balmy fastness of his home,
And safety from a King he dared not meet.

From out my realms no farther will I go,
Ho ! Northwind, pause. I'll rest me here awhile.

Then comes a calm ; all do his presence feel,
And now doth smiling Nature cease to smile.

But not for aye could rest the Ice King here ;
The Sun, his mighty ruler, will'd it so,
And bade the Heat to from his exile come,
The cold Usurper from these realms to go.

Sweet Southern winds once more unto those lands
The long-expected Heat do thither bear ;
Flowers do rejoice, for desolation 's past,
And laughing Nature once again is there.

A QUESTION.

WHY is 't that poets of the modern time
Seek in the graveyard of the buried Past
Fit subjects for their rhyme ?
Is it that topics in the day they live
Are all unworthy of a poet's thought,
That they no record give ?
Alas ! 't is not from choice that this be so,
That these, whene'er they seek a mighty theme,
Must back far distant go.
Still just as sweet the violet decks the Spring,
And yet the feather'd dwellers of the grove
As joyfully do sing.
Ah ! well, they in whose minds the thought doth
rise,
They who would write sweet lays of birds and
flowers,
And charms of woman's eyes,

Still find fit models in the present day,
From whence an inspiration they may draw
For all that they would say.
But poet who would make the reader feel,
Would show those sparks which glittering fall
From hot impassioned steel,
In 'Time's perspective are his subjects born,
Who lived, and living acted mighty rôles,
Once in creation's morn.

SAVED.



PRETTY violet one day
To Heaven raised its head,
And humbly begged one drop of dew,
From thirst 't was almost dead.

And sad its little flower heart,
That Fate had will'd it so,
Its bright and happy home to leave,
In unknown fields to blow.

But now a cloud of darken'd hue,
Borne by the west wind's breath,
Swept o'er the scene, its mission was
To save that flower from death.

Down came the rain with fresh'ning touch ;
The violet look'd above,
And cast toward Heav'n—its Friend in need—
One grateful look of love.

If, then, a Kindly Power above
Can hear a flower's call,
Will not kind favors, if we ask,
Descend upon us all ?

TO EDWIN BOOTH.

INSPIRED creations of a master-mind,
King, warrior, prelate, or whate'er they be,
As perfect read, as perfect them we see
When they embodiment in thee do find.
And did that Wizard now live on the earth,
Who doth man's inmost nature ever reach
Alike by witcheries of thought and speech,
Unto the world he'd have thee give them birth.
Far distant be the day when we must part ;
I pray the Fates long may they let thee stay,
Giving to us bright glances at thy Art
As run we swiftly with the world away.
This better name than acting I would give
A part thou dost not act, but e'en do live.

THE END.





Schoolcraft. Arsiesis and other poems.

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